SPRINGFIELD

Adam Weddle

an orchard book
- Spring 2025 -

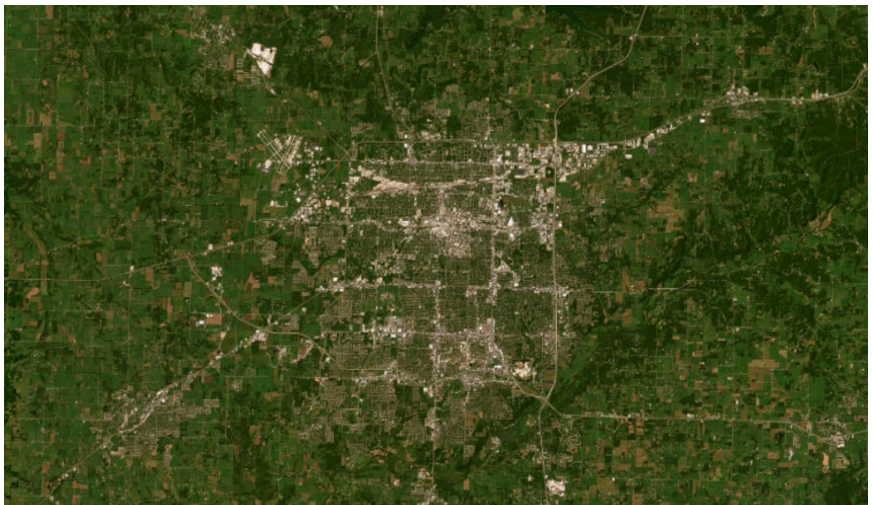
"At Rolla we found a good eating-house and a pretty fair town, but soon after we entered a worse country than ever, too poor even to produce timber, and this continued to near Springfield, which we reached soon after dark... Old Springfield is two miles or more from the railroad, but at the depot has sprung up a new, modern, and decidedly tasty town, with a first-class hotel of the new Southern style. In the morning we were astonished to find the ground covered with three inches of snow, and more coming, 'the Ekynoxual stawm,' the landlord said, and for aught I know, he may be correct.

'What are the productions of this area?' I asked a citizen at breakfast.

'Oh, cawn, muils, sweet taters, and stock. Not as much cawn as afo' the wah, but mo' stock. Things changed 'round so since the wah. Been better for some places, wuss fo' others. Lots o' our people kep a fussin after they come hoam. Then about three yeahs ago the wusst ones went off to Arkansaw and the Injun Nation, and new eemigrants tuck their place. But these new fellows settled all in spots, and the places wher' they settled has gone ahead, ye see, and the rest of the country's gone back.'

Springfield and Rolla are the only places where I have observed any sign of 'new eemigrants.' The train started at 7.30 and soon took us out of the Springfield oasis into a worse country, if possible, than we had yet traversed. Wearied of the sight, I concluded to read, and the train boy brought his stock of books, which struck me as so good an index of the taste of most of his customers on this road that I made out a list: *Confession of Hildebrand, the Outlaw, Murderer, and Guerilla*; *Confession and Trial of Ruloff, the Learned Murderer*; *Life and Death of James Fisk*; *The Coral Lady*; *Mysteries of New York*; *Confession of Horn, a Wife Murderer*; *Ginger Snaps*; *Habits of Good Society*; *Jolly Joker*, and two of Charles Reade's works. Such is the mental aliment of the average traveling public here."

John Hanson Beadle, *The Undeveloped West; or, Five Years in the Territories: A Complete History of That Vast Region Between the Mississippi and the Pacific*, 1873

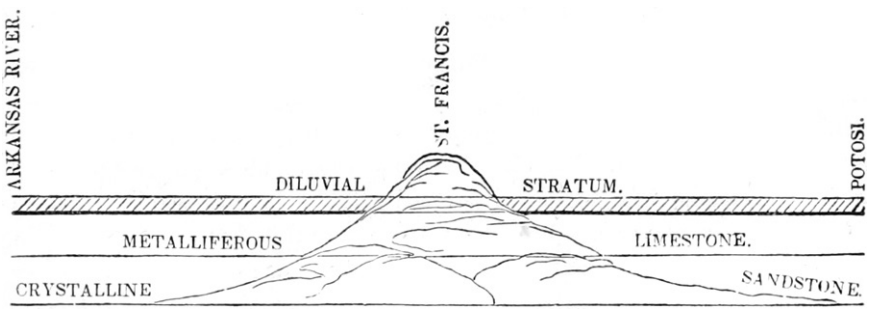


Springfield, Missouri is a convincing candidate for the mean, median, and mode of American towns. It sits near the geographical center of the country, three hours in any direction from the nearest big city. Even the name Springfield, shared by communities in thirty out of fifty states, resists specification. Springfields are everywhere. Wisconsin alone has five. Missouri's is the most populous Springfield in the United States, comparable to a Shreveport, a Fort Collins, or a Rancho Cucamonga. It is not, however, the inspiration for the town in *The Simpsons*, which is likely the most popular Springfield, and which a 2012 episode revealed is "in any state but yours."

It is tempting to believe that Springfields are places people drive through or fly over on their way somewhere else. Springfield, Missouri is a nexus for overland shipping, often cited as place of origin on the doors of eighteen-wheelers two or three states away. It is a common rest stop for cross-country drivers on I-44, the insterstate built on the ruins of U.S. Route 66. It's in the last stretch of highway before the distances start to feel western, and it's possible to speed past it without noticing much beyond a few exit signs advertising fast food and Walmart. But like most anonymous places, Springfield exerts its own kind of gravity that grows more perceptible with patience.

THE OZARK ISLANDS

A PREHISTORY



There is a large gray rock in the backyard of the house where I grew up in Springfield, Missouri. It's about three feet tall, shaped vaguely like an egg, and pockmarked with the shrapnel of ancient life. Segments of trilobite armor and the spiral contours of ammonite shells sit frozen in a matrix of sediment. When I was a child, I imagined the shells as ancestral creatures identical to the snails and roly-polies I would pick out of our garden. There are spindly branches scattered across the rock face that I interpreted as insects' limbs or petrified plant life. I never suspected that those branching stems traced the remnants of coral polyps, or that the ammonites, in their pristine, helical shells, were swimming.

For most of North America's existence, its middle longitudes were underwater. In the hill country known as the Ozarks, of which Springfield is the "Queen City," only one particularly ancient ridge was never submerged. The peaks of that ridge formed a chain of islands in the primordial sea. When biodiversity exploded in the Cambrian Age, the warm, shallow waters around the Ozarks archipelago became teeming coral reefs. It took the Americas crashing into each other some two hundred million years later to lift the entire region out of the water. The exposed island rock became the Ozarks' beveled spine, and the reefs formed foothills in the surrounding plains. The geology is oldest at the center and younger as it spreads outward. The igneous core of the Ozarks began to form one and a half billion years ago. The Andes, Alps, and Himalayas all formed less than fifty million years ago. There are pieces of the Ozarks that were in place for three

hundred million years before the oldest Appalachians sprouted and a billion years before the Rockies.

Assuming our rock was dug up from the Ozarks, it is almost certainly a piece of limestone. As the seafloor rose, the coral decayed into calcium-rich sediments that were compressed into limestone by the weight of millennia. Relics of the reef's inhabitants were encased in the sediment and carried to the surface with the rest of the landscape. Most limestone in the Ozarks was deposited during one of two periods in geologic history: Ordovician time, which immediately followed the Cambrian explosion, and the Mississippian period around a hundred million years later. Somewhere in that span the ammonites began to develop their spiral shells, and therefore our specimen belongs to the later period. The limestone in our yard is young for the Ozarks, but it predates the supercontinent Pangaea. The fragments of life encrusted on its surface are older than anything resembling a dinosaur.

A billion years of wind have worn what remains of the Ozark islands into rolling swells. Seen from a high vantage, they appear light enought to shiver in the breeze like supple fabric. The land that was once submerged wears its age more plainly. Limestone is highly porous and soluble in water. The outer Ozarks emerged from the sea already disintegrating, chewed up from the inside. Rainwater has pitted the exposed rock with gullies, caves, sinkholes, and springs. The largest cave systems record the paths of subterranean rivers, some of which are old enough to have flowed beneath the seafloor. The caves that break the surface have become sites for the still newborn confluence of human and geologic time. They offered vital shelter to the Ozarks' earliest inhabitants, and since then, they've been economic boons, tourist attractions, and outlaw hideouts. They are places where secrets are kept.

I've often wondered how this piece of the Ozarks came to sit in our yard. It's a strange choice for a lawn ornament, not particularly appealing unless you stoop to examine it. It must be too heavy to move by hand, though we never really tried. It remains where it was when we first moved in, at the center of a garden bed shaded by an oak tree. Our yard has evolved around it. There was once a bird bath next to the rock that we removed when we got our dog. The birds have since returned. Fences have been built and torn down. Our garden beds have changed form and contents many times over. The grass in Springfield grows out of control for a few months every spring, but the rest of the year it turns crunchy and brown, choked by heat or leaves or frost. Occasionally, during the winter months, everything in our yard becomes sheathed in a clear film of ice, even the most delicate twigs on the trees. When the thaw comes, only the rock appears unchanged.

A SPRINGFIELD CHRONOLOGY

Archaeologists have discovered artifacts in the region now known as the Ozarks from as early as 200 B.C.E.. The materials found in these artifacts – fragments of shells, teeth, and bones of distant origin – suggest the area was once a western terminus for a vast network of trade routes. This network had developed over many thousands of years along the riverways of the Mississippi watershed. At its peak, it stretched from what is now Quebec to the Gulf of Mexico.

By 650 C.E., competition for resources had caused the riverway network to splinter into more localized communities. The Plum Bayou people emerged around this time in the floodplain of the White River. They took shelter in the limestone caves of the Ozark Mountains. They cultivated barley, squash, and small amounts of maize, and they gathered the native plums, cherries, pawpaw, and persimmons that grew in the hills. Visitors from the western plains and deserts introduced them to the bow and arrow, which they used to hunt white-tailed deer.

Around the year 800, the scattered local communities began to coalesce into the Caddoan Mississippian culture, which would last for another eight centuries. The Caddoans ranged from the Ozark Mountains in the north to the Mississippi delta in the south. Each Caddoan village organized a large workforce to construct a platform mound for social and religious gatherings. They kept their mounds swept clean. The Caddo language is the first antecedent of a unique language family. Linguists have attempted to find connections with the Siouan or Algonquin families, but with no success.

In 1541, the Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto ranged inland from Florida and became the first European to cross the Mississippi River. His expedition was funded with the plunder he had taken as Pizarro's lieutenant during the conquest of the Incas. Soon after crossing, de Soto encountered a clan of Caddoans that his secretaries described as "the best fighting people the Christians met with" in all their travels. The Spaniards were forced to retreat back to the Mississippi's eastern shore, where de Soto died the following spring.

In 1620, a Siouan-speaking tribe from the Ohio River Valley began migrating west to avoid incursions from Europeans and Iroquois. They soon defeated the Caddoans and established the Osage Nation in the lands between the Missouri and Red rivers. The Osage sold furs to the French colonizers at St. Louis, and the resulting wealth made them the dominant tribe in the region for almost two hundred years.

In 1754, a new theater of the Seven Years' War broke out in North America between the colonies of Britain and France. The Osage sided with the French in order to fight the Iroquois Confederacy, which George Washington had convinced to join the British. Around this time, the French began referring to the mountainous region south of St. Louis as "aux arcs," short for "aux Arcansas," which was their name for the Quapaw people who had also fled the Iroquois and settled just south of the Osage.

In 1762, with defeat imminent in the Seven Years' War, France signed a secret treaty with Spain ceding all of their territory west of the Mississippi. Despite quickly asserting control over the trading cities of St. Louis and New Orleans, the Spanish rarely ventured into the vast country between them where de Soto was defeated.

In 1800, Spain sold the entire territory of Louisiana back to France in exchange for parts of Tuscany.

In 1803, Napoleon Bonaparte officially reassumed ownership of Louisiana. Three weeks later, he sold it to the newborn United States for fifteen million dollars. Only a small portion of the territory was actually controlled by France at the time.

In 1808, the Osage signed a treaty with the United States to establish a border "beginning at fort Clark, on the Missouri, five miles above Fire Prairie, and running thence a due south course to the river Arkansas, and down the same to the Mississippi; hereby ceding and relinquishing forever to the United States, all the lands which lie east of the said line, and north of the southwardly bank of the said river Arkansas, and all lands situated northwardly of the river Missouri."

In 1818, a geologist and ethnographer of Native American cultures named Henry Rowe Schoolcraft embarked on an exploration of the Ozarks, ostensibly to identify potential sites for lead mining. He departed from Potosi, the deepest American settlement in the Ozarks at the time, just seventy miles south of St. Louis. The journals he kept of his travels became the first written account of the region by a white settler since de Soto's expedition. Schoolcraft reached the westernmost point of his journey on the last day of the year. As he and his companions explored the banks of the James River, the tributary that now supplies drinking water to the city of Springfield, Schoolcraft followed a clear trickle to the mouth of a limestone cave. "On entering it, the first feeling was that of being in 'a large place,'" Schoolcraft writes. "There was no measure for the eye to compute height or width. We seemed suddenly to be beholding some secret of the great works of nature, which had been hid from the foundation of the world. The impulse, on these occasions, is to shout. I called it Winoca, from the Osage word for an underground spirit."

In 1819, a few days after returning from his journey, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft described his findings in a letter to Jesse B. Thomas, one of the first two U.S. Senators for the new state of Illinois. “There is much that is most striking and picturesque in the scenery of this region, and not less in its productions and physical character. Nowhere, probably, on the globe, is there such a remarkable succession of limestone caverns, and large, transparent springs… We found the ores of lead, iron, and manganese, in large bodies. The high uplands are often rent by precipitous valleys and large chasms, caused by the force of these streams. These valleys are well wooded, and contain the richest soil. And this broad region must at no distant day attract settlement, and will afford facilities for agriculture and mining, while its abundant water-power gives it great advantages for milling and manufactures.”

In 1820, Senator Thomas put forth the Missouri Compromise, which would create a new slave state in Missouri while limiting slavery in the rest of the Louisiana Territory.

In 1821, Missouri was admitted as the 24th state in the Union. The official census put the state population at just under seventy thousand, of whom ten thousand were enslaved. Native Americans were not counted.

In 1829, a white settler named John Polk Campbell reached the Ozarks from Tennessee. He encountered a village of around a hundred wigwams built by Kickapoo people, with Lenape communities to the south and Osage to the north and east. He is believed to have discovered a freshwater spring near the village, at which point he carved his name into a tree to claim the land as his own. The site of the spring is now on Water Street in Springfield, Missouri. It has since been paved over to build Founder's Park, a concrete monument designed to resemble a limestone quarry.

In 1830, the Indian Removal Act was signed into law. The Trail of Tears ran through Springfield along an Osage trading path that later became the route for the telegraph line from St. Louis. The Osage were forcibly displaced to a part of Oklahoma that happened to be rich in oil and minerals. Their tribal headrights to this land were violently pursued by the white businessmen of the area for another hundred years.

In 1835, John Polk Campbell deeded fifty acres of land to the newly created Greene County in order to establish Springfield as the county seat. At that time, Greene County covered all of southern Missouri.

In 1861, the Union and Confederate armies fought their first major battle west of the Mississippi on the outskirts of Springfield. The Battle of Wilson's Creek was a Confederate victory with more than 2,000 casualties, roughly equal to the total population of Springfield at the time. Among the dead was Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union general to die in the Civil War. The Union recaptured Springfield two months later when a minor aide to General John C. Frémont led a surprise cavalry charge through town. The aide was a Hungarian revolutionary named Charles Zagonyi. He was said to have personally selected his cavalry's horses, uniforms, hats, and sabers to match those of the Hungarian Hussars.

In 1862, a local farmer named John Knox discovered the entrance to a cave on his property when his hunting dog chased an animal inside. Knox kept his discovery secret for the remainder of the war; he suspected both armies would be interested in the cave as a source of saltpeter, which was then used to make gunpowder.

In 1865, Wild Bill Hickok shot and killed Davis Tutt in a quick-draw duel in Springfield's Park Central Square. The two were once good friends who often gambled together despite fighting on opposite sides of the war. Hickok had been forced to give Tutt his gold watch as collateral for unpaid gambling debts. The duel started when he saw Tutt flaunting the watch in public.

In 1867, John Knox took out an ad in the *Weekly Patriot* newspaper asking for help exploring the cave he had found. Twelve women from the Springfield Women's Athletic Club volunteered. They ventured inside with ladders, ropes, and lanterns, and discovered an extensive system of spacious caverns. The names of the twelve women are etched on the wall of the largest cavern, which they called the Grand Ballroom.

In 1876, the St. Louis-San Francisco Railway, also known as the Frisco, was incorporated in Springfield. The Frisco stop north of Springfield briefly created a new town, North Springfield, which eventually merged with Springfield along what is now Division Street.

In 1906, three Black men named Horace Duncan, Fred Coker, and Will Allen were incarcerated in the Springfield county jail after being falsely accused of violent crimes. On Easter Sunday, a mob of more than 2,000 white residents abducted them from the jail and beat them to death. The mob then burned their bodies and hung them from an iron construction in Park Central Square called the Gottfried Tower, which was capped by a bronze replica of the Statue of Liberty.

In 1907, a traveling Christian minister named Harold Bell Wright published a pastoral novel set in the Ozarks called *The Shepherd in the Hills*. The book was an international best-seller and was said to have made Wright the first millionaire novelist.

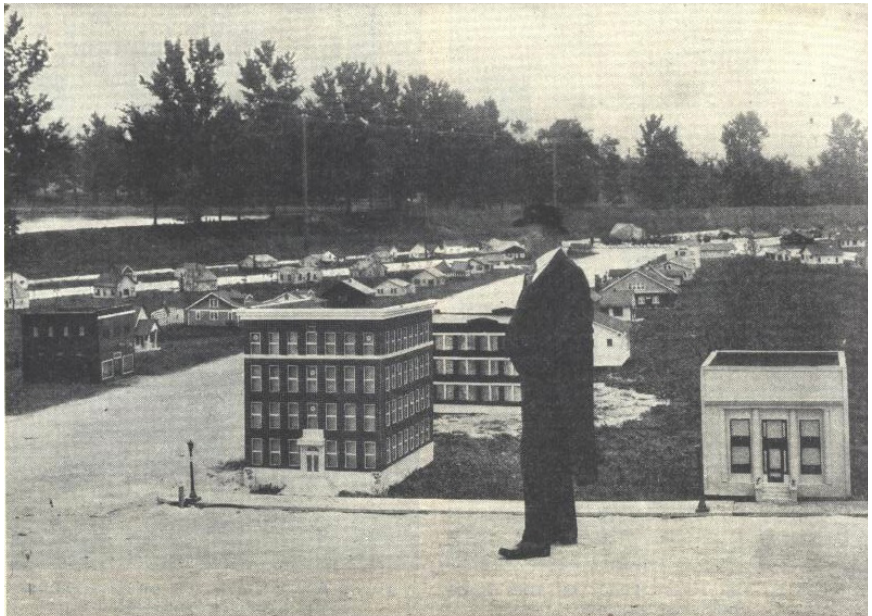
In 1908, the illustrator, author, and suffragist Rose O'Neill drew a series of jolly cherubs while visiting her family's homestead in the Ozarks. She named the characters Kewpies, and they debuted in an issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* the following year. Soon afterwards, at O'Neill's direction, a German company began manufacturing Kewpie bisque dolls. The Kewpies' success made O'Neill the highest-paid female illustrator of her time. She used her fortune to build a sprawling Victorian estate on her family's land called the Bonniebrook Homestead. She also purchased homes in New York, Capri, and Paris, where she was briefly tutored in sculpture by Auguste Rodin.

In 1909, the Gottfried Tower was torn down.

In 1914, representatives from several Pentecostal Christian denominations met in the Ozarks to form the Assemblies of God, which has now become the world's largest Pentecostal body. It has at least sixty million adherents spread across 190 countries. Its headquarters are still in Springfield.

In 1919, the local school children built a village of miniature houses to be displayed in the basement of the local convention center. The project was called Tiny Town, and its first iteration consisted of 400 structures built at a scale of one half-inch to one foot. It was proposed by a developer named William Howard Johnson to encourage the adults of Springfield to purchase and develop more land. The project inspired a wave of similar civic engagement efforts in school districts around the country. Springfield experienced a housing boom in the early 1920s, though it remains unclear whether Tiny Town was responsible.

In 1922, the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan briefly purchased Knox's cave, which had become a speakeasy. They renamed it the Ku Klux Klavern and invited the public to attend meetings in the Grand Ballroom.



In 1925, a new and expanded Tiny Town opened to the public in Grant Beach Park. The miniature city now included 1,000 houses and over 200 other structures, including shops, schools, churches, and government buildings. It had functional water mains and electrical lines. There was a marching band, the Tiny Town Tots, and a daily newspaper, *The Tiny Town Times*. After a robust campaign, a fourteen-year-old girl was elected mayor of Tiny Town, and a fifteen-year-old boy was elected city manager. A delegation from the Tiny Town government was sent to Washington D.C. to invite President Calvin Coolidge to visit, but he declined.

In 1926, John Woodruff of Springfield and Cyrus Avery of Tulsa lobbied the federal government for an interstate route from Chicago to Los Angeles that would pass through their hometowns. In a telegram to federal officials sent from the Colonial Hotel in Springfield, the pair suggested that the road be called Route 66 rather than the proposed Route 62, as Route 66 was catchier.

In 1930, a federal prison hospital for high-security inmates opened in Springfield. Originally called the United States Hospital for Defective Delinquents, it is now the United States Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, or MCFP Springfield. It has housed serial killers, domestic terrorists, Nazi spies, and countless mafia bosses. John Gotti died there, as did the fictional mobster John "Johnny Sack" Sacrimoni in *The Sopranos*. Current inmates include a former kingpin of the Medellín Cartel and the white supremacist who drove a car through a crowd of protestors in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In 1944, Rose O'Neill died in Springfield at the age of 69. She had lost almost all of her wealth by the end of her life due to excessive spending and a drop in demand for illustration in favor of photography. She was forced to sell all her other assets, but she insisted on keeping her Bonniebrook estate. "I love this place better than anywhere on Earth," she told the Ozarks folklorist Vance Randolph. "Here I have done my best work. Here in the shadow of the Ozark hills I want to live and die." The Bonniebrook Homestead burned to the ground shortly after her death.

In 1952, while visiting Springfield for his army division's reunion parade, President Harry S. Truman watched from a viewing stand as the actor Ronald Reagan passed by in a convertible. Reagan and his wife Nancy were on their way to the premiere of his film *The Winning Team*, which was being held at Springfield's Gillioz Theater.

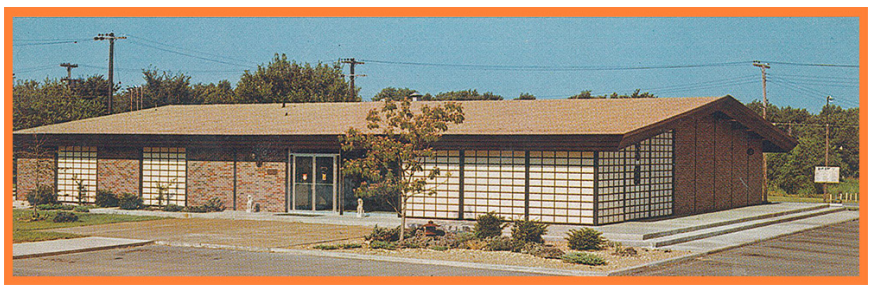
In 1953, at least a dozen venomous cobras escaped from an exotic pet store in downtown Springfield, thus beginning the Great Cobra Scare of 1953. The city-wide snake hunt lasted for several months. Police were inundated with reported sightings. The city's health director Del Caywood toured Springfield in a radio van he had rigged to play what the newspaper referred to as "Hindu snake charmer music," or the "Snake 'Em Out Blues." Children were not allowed to play outside without an armed adult. By winter, eleven cobras had been killed with a range of tools including rocks, clubs, garden hoes, ice picks, nooses, and tear gas. One snake was captured alive after being shot with a pistol. It was taken to the Dickerson Park Zoo, where it was exhibited for visitors until its death. A science teacher at Jarrett Junior High named Herbert Condray pickled it along with three others and preserved them in glass jars. The cobra with the gunshot wound is now on display in the Trustee Science Center at Drury University. The whereabouts of the other three pickled cobras are unknown.

In 1955, a country music variety show called *Ozark Jubilee* premiered on ABC. The show was filmed in Springfield and hosted by Red Foley, the nation's biggest country star at the time. Local broadcasters Ralph Foster and Si Siman had developed the series from their radio show on KWTO, which stood for "Keep Watching the Ozarks." At its peak, *Ozark Jubilee* attracted nine million weekly viewers. It helped launch the careers of Brenda Lee, Chet Atkins, the Carter Sisters, and many others. It also featured a Black vocal quintet, the Philharmonics, as part of its regular cast. They were the first Black performers to be credited on a nationally televised program. The *Jubilee*'s success prompted other networks to produce spinoff series in Springfield, one of which was an NBC production called *Farmarama* that recorded with a live audience in Fantastic Caverns, formerly known as the Ku Klux Klavern. During the five years *Ozark Jubilee* was on the air, Springfield was the nation's biggest producer of network television after New York and Hollywood. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* claimed in 1956 that "Springfield has become the recognized center of the country music world. In fact, it is generally agreed in television, recording and radio circles, that Springfield, now a city of 90,000, has shaken Nashville, Tennessee, home of the *Grand Ole Opry* and long-time mecca of hillbilly musicians, to its very foundations."

In 1960, Mark Trimble and his family opened the Shepherd in the Hills Theater on the Ozarks property where Harold Bell Wright had written his bestselling novel. The Trimbles' outdoor performance of *The Shepherd in the Hills* drew huge crowds to the quiet river town of Branson. By the end of the year, several other theaters had sprung up in Branson to compete with the Trimbles. One of these was the Mabe family's Baldknobbers Hillbilly Jamboree, which took its name from a group of vigilantes who had terrorized the Ozarks in the Reconstruction era and appeared briefly in *The Shepherd in the Hills*. The Mabe family's production was a comedy variety show of the kind that would eventually dominate Branson with acts like Yakov Smirnoff and Shoji Tabuchi.

In 1961, the Trimble family purchased Fantastic Caverns, which sat empty after NBC's short-lived *Farmarama* was cancelled. The Trimbles paved the caverns with concrete and began offering ride-through tours in red Jeeps powered by propane. It remains the only cave tour of its kind in the United States.

In 1962, CBS premiered *The Beverly Hillbillies*, a sitcom about a poor family from the Missouri Ozarks who move to Beverly Hills after striking oil on their land. The show's creator Paul Henning said he was inspired by a camping trip he took in the Ozarks as a Boy Scout. Despite almost uniformly negative reviews, *The Beverly Hillbillies* was the most-watched series in America for its first two years. One critic wrote in the 1962 *TV Guide*, "The whole notion on which *The Beverly Hillbillies* is founded is an encouragement to ignorance... But it is funny. What can I do?" The series aired for nine seasons. It is still syndicated and televised daily.



In 1963, a journeyman cook from Guangdong, China named David Leong was set to open his own restaurant in Springfield. Leong had become a naturalized American citizen during World War II. He landed in the fourth wave at Omaha Beach on D-Day. The week that Leong's Tea House was set to open, someone threw ten sticks of dynamite at the building and stole the two lion statues that sat outside the door. Leong was able to rebuild in less than a month, and his Tea House was a success. Leong's signature dish, developed during his time as a line cook at local steakhouses, was "cashew chicken" – essentially fried chicken in gravy made from cashews and oyster sauce. It is now served at every Chinese restaurant in town. Greasy spoon diners include it on their menus alongside dishes like chicken-fried steak and hash browns. In St. Louis and Kansas City, cashew chicken is served "Springfield-style."

In 1965, the director Juleen Compton shot a film called *The Plastic Dome of Norma Jean* on location in the Ozark Mountains. The film follows a young girl with psychic powers who mail-orders a giant plastic dome from a catalog. A traveling rock band discovers her abilities and coerces her into soothsaying for the residents of Table Rock, Missouri from inside the dome. Mark Trimble served as location coordinator for the film, and one of the girl's visions involves a cave-in at Fantastic Caverns. A camera crew from the Springfield news channel *KY-TV* is shown reporting on the incident. *The Plastic Dome* features the actor Sam Waterston's screen debut. It premiered the following year at the Cannes Film Festival.

In 1973, a Springfield rock band called Cosmic Corn Cob & His Ozark Mountain Daredevils dropped the corn cob from their name and released their self-titled debut, colloquially known as "The Quilt Album." Their songs "If You Wanna Get to Heaven" and "Jackie Blue" became radio hits. The Daredevils were a regular arena act in the Midwest for the remainder of the seventies, often sharing bills with the Beach Boys, the Allman Brothers, and the Eagles.

In 1981, after a decade selling fishing tackle out of the back of his father's Brown Derby Liquor Store, Johnny Morris opened his flagship Bass Pro Shops on Campbell Avenue. He is now the richest person in Missouri with a net worth approaching ten billion dollars.

In 1982, Brad Pitt graduated from Springfield's Kickapoo High School. He later described the Ozarks as "Mark Twain country, Jesse James country" during an interview for *Inside the Actor's Studio*.

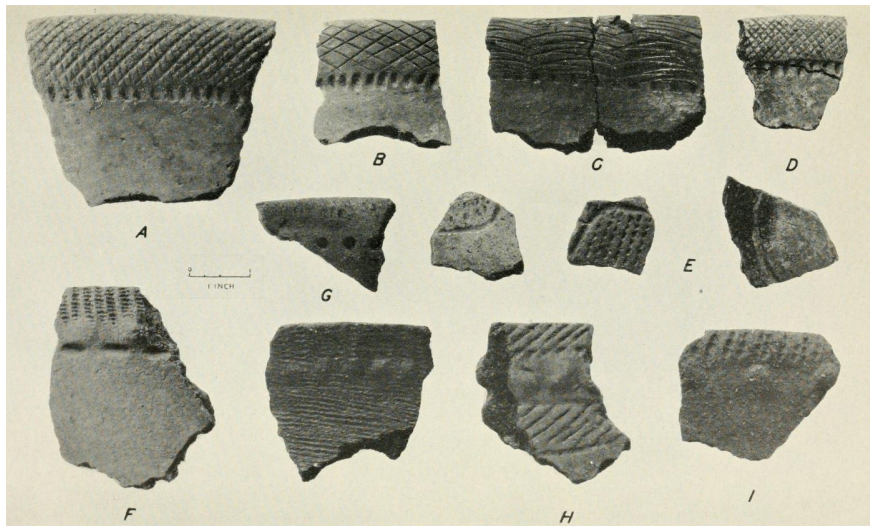
In 1987, the real estate mogul John Q. Hammons completed construction on his Hammons Tower, a monolithic black skyscraper that still dominates the Springfield skyline. It is the city's tallest building by eighteen feet. Locals refer to it as the Darth Vader Tower.

In 1988, thirty-five years after the Great Cobra Scare, a man named Carl Barnett confessed to a *Springfield News-Leader* reporter that "I'm the one that done it." Barnett had purchased a tropical fish from the exotic pet store when he was a teenager, but the fish died soon after. The store's owner refused to give him a refund, so Barnett sought retribution by lifting the lid on a crate of snakes. "I didn't know what kind of snakes they were, or I never would've let them go," Barnett told the *News-Leader*. "For years I was afraid they'd figure out it had been me, and off I'd go to jail. It definitely is the biggest thing I ever was involved in in my life."

In 1993, reconstruction was completed on the Bonniebrook Homestead, which now holds the Kewpie Museum and Rose O'Neill archives.

In 2005, an Osage elder named Lucille Robedeaux passed away at the age of 90. She was the last native speaker of the Osage language, which is now extinct. The modern descendants of the Caddoan language, Pawnee and Arikara, are spoken by ten tribal leaders in Texas and Oklahoma. The original Caddo is spoken by only two people in the world.

In 2023, the United States Census estimated the population of Springfield to be 170,188.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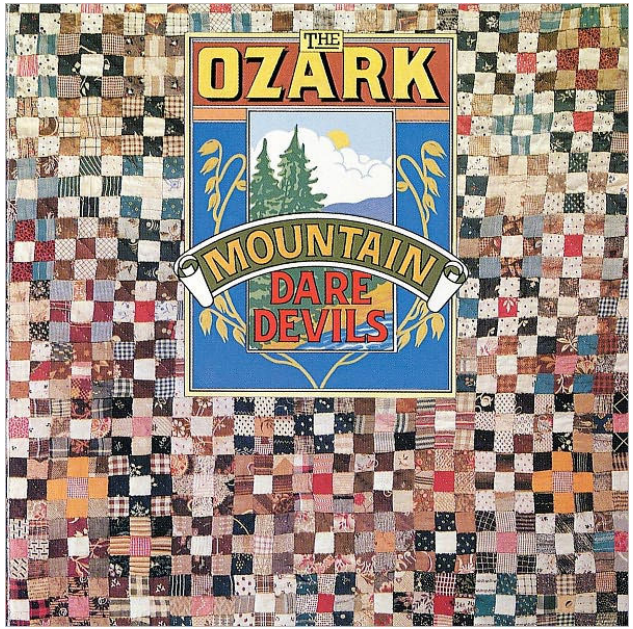
AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE 1973 DEBUT ALBUM BY

THE OZARK MOUNTAIN DAREDEVILS

AS TOLD IN YOUTUBE COMMENTS



I LOVE LIVIN' IN THE OZARKS,IT IS BY FAR MY FAVORITE PLACE ON THE PLANET!

I was born & raised in the Ozarks & this is my music!

One of the first albums I bought,it brings back do many memories of my teenage yrs in the 70s I will listen to this till I die.Love them!

Song I imagine relaxing in a rocking chair, sipping moonshine, overlooking the Ozark Mountains.

I was very fortunate to see one of their two 1980 reunion shows in Springfield, December 1980.

I seen some of these dudes hanglide into a venue 1time

in 1983 I drove to California alone “to find myself, or anyone else”. Listened to this the entire way on an old cassette player. Came home as alone as when I left. Things worked out. Still Love this recording! Music is a connection to memories and perhaps helped create them.

Braw! All the way from Scotland long time no hear Still classic!

Great song, it was one of the songs that made me long for my return to the Philippines which I did in 1978 when I was in the Navy when I got stationed there. It was the very best tour of duty for me in hte Navy.

My parents raised me on music from this era, and I’m so glad they did. I taught myself this song a long time ago on the guitar, then I lost my way because of drinking and partying and was too focused on chasing other things. Now I’m getting sober and, well, music is my best friend. And guitar can be the only girl I need, metaphorically of course. I must re-learn this song. God is good. And definitely putting this song on my playlist for when I float down the Current River in southern MO

This song kinda rocks,after a few whiskey sours.
It raises a little hell.

if the atlanta rythm section made a baby with the little river band . . . .this is the kinda song they would bang out.

Man,l love them,but this one was a flop,got too far from their roots,Caint get it on

this was my and my fiancé’s song. She lived out in the country and me in town...I was walking her home one evening and a drunk driver...its been nearly 50 years and I can still see her face...my Country Girl...I’ll see her again one day...but not yet...

One of the many bands my Momma raised me on. I miss her... lost her a few years ago but music like this helps me keep her memory alive. Very thankful for my love of music that my Mom passed onto me. Miss you, Momma! - kornfreak78

played with you all in south mo. in the 70's live in iowa now still playing your music it was the best time of my life thank you!!!!!!!!! love Dave Govig

Nice to hear that we have some new Daredevils, love this , grew up on it waiting for my seeds to grow.

I took my truck in today too the Ford House, and there's a girl wearing muddy rubber boots in tight rip gens. Boy that looked dam good.

Today the wind here in Oklahoma blew heartily. What a great way to unwind inside to this fabulous band. Yeehaw

June 14 2020 life just couldn't get any better. Beautiful music

The days to music to souls writers real

I was lucky and partied with them in Minneapolis over 40 years ago

I was so g this whole doing bloder acid in 1974

Saw these guys at the 1982 worlds fair in knoxville,tenn. A person in the audience gave Steve Cash a shirt that said-Wine'um, Dine'um, 69um. Great moment for a great band

My 1st wife hated this song (we went to Branson, MO, sometime in the 80's and saw the OMD). However, My 2nd wife bought me a large three ton rock for my computer room for my 84th birthday and which I stand on, complete with American and Australian flags, (She's an Aussie) whenever I play this song! Once in a while, we invite the neighbors over, have an "Eat what you Brung" Banquet, then have a merry sing along together!

The vibe is described, so beautiful!! Dear Ozark Mountain! Loved them since around 1972!!! Just cannot say enough how I love their music! Just cool rockin hillbilly music, Ha! Just jokin!

This album is like a conciseness awakening for must of us. A calling of our souls. A farm, chickens, peace, independence, far away neighbors, lots of nature, just being free in a eternal love with all everything in that moment of bliss....Infinitely Blessed

I NEEDED to listen to THIS SONG on REPEAT (8track) back in 1980 in my boyfriend David's Dodge Dart OVER & OVER AGAIN
(he may remember)...
There was and is even NOW
a reason it is TIMELESS!!!! AMAZING

Gotta get back to the country.. that's where we all come from..

Die hard fan from Vancouver Canada...playing Ozarks since i was a boy in the '70's....long for those days when my yard backed onto a farm...not a subdivision

I saw a lot of bands in the 70s I saw these guys 3 times they were the best by far the eagles up in quad cities in IL we bood the eagles we want Ozark

Wish they times can come back again! Happy hippie!

I been listening to this song for more than forty years. Speaks of the absurdity of life while we cluck our inexorable voyage away to the slaughter. Someone owns the train. I love them Ozark Mountain Daredevils. They are Gods.

were still playing your music my friends say we sound like hicks i say i hope so

IMAGES

1) Aerial map of Springfield; U.S. Geological Survey, 2025

2) Illustration of Ozark strata; Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Scenes and Adventures in the Semi-Alpine Regions of the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Arkansas*, 1853

3) Watercolor by S. Fred Prince, Ozarks botanist, illustrator, and bookmaker; S. Fred Prince, *The Woodland Booke*, 1932

4) Postcard of Gottfried Tower in Park Central Square, 1879-1909; Wikimedia Commons

5) William H. Johnson, publicity director of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, standing in Tiny Town; *Popular Science Montly*, Dec. 1925

6) Rose O'Neill, c. 1930; Bonniebrook Historical Society

7) World premiere of *The Winning Team*; *Springfield News-Leader*, 1952

8) Police officer with cobra, 1953; The History Museum On The Square

9) Leong's Tea House, 1960s; Leong's Asian Foods

10) Bass Pro Shops, 1980s, from the slide collection of Milton D. Rafferty; Missouri State University Special Collections and Archives

11) Pottery shards in the Hopewell tradition from southwest Missouri, 200-100 B.C.E.; *Proceedings of the United States National Museum*, Vol. 86, No. 3045, 1938

12) Map of Springfield published by G. D. Weeks, April 1908; Greene County Archives

13) Park Central Square, 1940s; Springfield, Missouri Convention & Visitors Bureau

14) Park Central Square, 1971, from the slide collection of Milton D. Rafferty; Missouri State University Special Collections and Archives

15) *The Ozark Mountain Daredevils*, 1973; A&M Records

16) Table Rock Lake, from the slide collection of Milton D. Rafferty; Missouri State University Special Collections and Archives

17) Ozarks squall, from the slide collection of Milton D. Rafferty; Missouri State University Special Collections and Archives

THANK YOU

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